THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) Yes.

(b) and (c) Government have been closely monitoring the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories, including the Gaza Strip. The matter has been the subject of an exchange of notes between the Foreign Minister of Egypt and the Minister of External Affairs. Government have also issued statements on the matter on January 18, 2008, February 11, 2008, March 1, 2008 and March 7, 2008. The subject was also touched upon in the *suo motu* statement of the Minister of External Affairs made in both Houses of Parliament on March 3, 2008. In the statements, Government have condemned the escalation of violence on all sides, urged restraint and expressed India's readiness to assist, including on the humanitarian aspects, in order to relieve the sufferings of the Palestinian people. Government remain engaged on the subject.

Indian workers in Dubai jail

1464. DR. M.A.M. RAMASWAMY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Central Government is aware that 45 Indian workers who protested against low salaries have been jailed by a Dubai Court;

(b) if so, the facts of the matter; and

(c) the steps taken by the Central Government for the release of these Indian workers from jail?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) and (b) 42 Indian workers who were involved in violence during a strike in November 2007 were arrested by the police and charged with breaching local laws. The Dubai court of first instance sentenced them on 21/02/2008 for 6 months in jail followed by deportation for engaging in violence during a labour strike.

(c) Indian Consulate officials visited the Dubai central jail on 26/02/08 and interacted with some of the 42 Indian workers about their conditions in jail as well as any legal assistance required by them to go on appeal against the judgment. The workers informed that their living conditions in jail were good and that they have confessed in court about damaging the properties of the company during the strike and protest. The workers conveyed that after standard remission, their sentence period would be getting over by March 2008 and they would like to return to India.

Crisis in Gaza Strip

1465. SHRI AMAR SINGH:
SHRI ABU ASIM AZMI:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn towards humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip on account of blockade of Gaza by Israel;

(b) whether Government is also aware that Israel Government has put the entire population of two million people in Gaza inside a cage, cut off electricity, stopped medicines and food supplies to them; and

(c) if so, Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) Yes.

(b) and (c) Government have been closely monitoring the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories, including the Gaza Strip. The matter has been the subject of an exchange of notes between the Foreign Minister of Egypt and the Minister of External Affairs. Government have also issued statements on the matter on January 18, 2008, February 11, 2008, March 1, 2008 and March 7, 2008. The subject was also touched upon in the *suo motu* statement of the Minister of External Affairs made in both Houses of Parliament on March 3, 2008. In the statements, Government have condemned the escalation of violence on all sides, urged restraint and expressed India's readiness to assist, including on the humanitarian aspects, in order to relieve the sufferings of the Palestinian people. Government remain engaged on the subject.

Restriction on Indian workers in Malaysia

†1466. SHRI PYARELAL KHANDELWAL: Will the Minister of OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government of Malaysia has imposed restrictions on Indian workers in their country;

(b) if so, the details thereof and reaction of Government thereto; and

(c) the details of steps taken by Government to safeguard interests of Indain workers residing in Malaysia?

THE MINISTER OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS (SHRI VAYALAR RAVI): (a) and (b) No, Sir. As per the report received from the High Commission of India in Kuala Lumpur the Minister of Home Affairs of Malaysia has categorically denied any move to limit the intake of workers from India. However, it has been informed that all foreign priests have to now go through more stringent checks. The Malaysian Minister of Home Affairs has denied that Indian temple priests were being prevented from coming to Malaysia; and

(c) Steps are a foot for signing a bilateral Memorandum of Understanding on Labour & Manpower Development between Malaysia and India, which will provide for an institutional framework to facilitate employment, protection and welfare of Indian workers in Malaysia. Negotiations have been completed and the MoU has been finalized. The MoU will be signed after completing the internal procedures by both countries.

Plight of HSMP Visa Holder

1467. SHRI DARA SINGH:
SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL:

Will the Minsiter of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware of U.K. Government's unsympathetic stand towards non-EEA (European Economic Authority) immigrants, majority of whom are Indians;

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.